

Guidance on Changes in the Plan of Work Software


FY13 Reporting Cycle

(2014 POW & 2012 Annual Report)

NIFA has continuously been making changes and improvements to the POW software and reporting process as a result of recommendations made by the Panel of Experts that convened in May, 2010. The Panel convened in order to satisfy a provision in the 2008 Farm Bill which stipulated that the “Secretary shall work with university partners in extension and research to review and identify measures to streamline the submission, reporting under, and implementation of plan of work requirements.” The NIFA Planning, Accountability, & Reporting Staff also implement changes based on feedback from POW State Users and on generally accepted best practices for reporting and management of software systems.

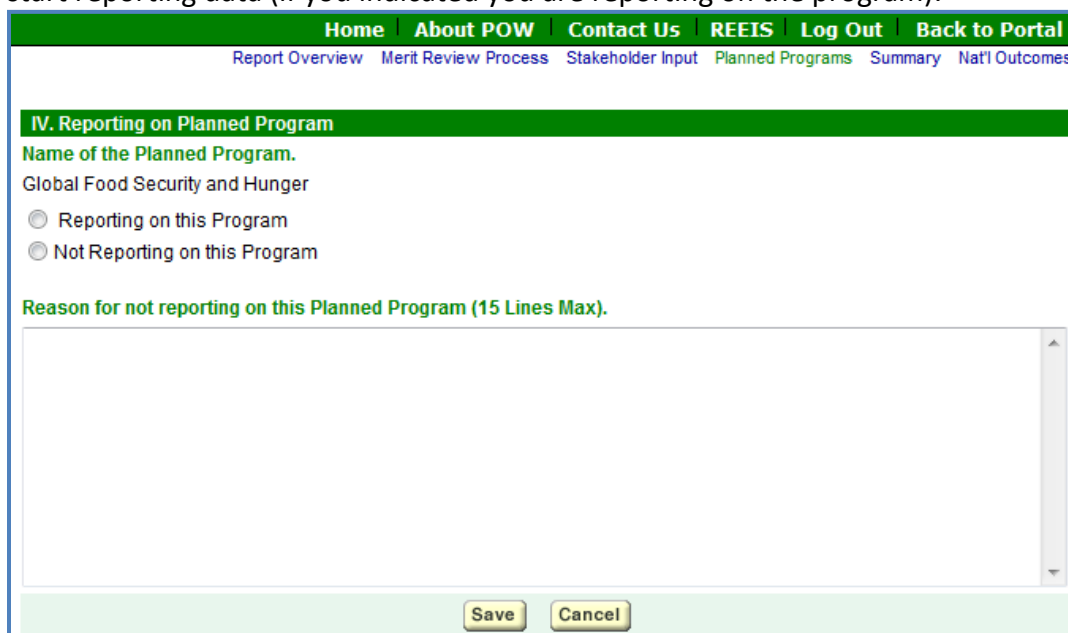
Following is a list of actual and planned changes for the FY13 reporting year (submission of the 2014-2018 POW and 2012 Annual Report).

Changes Affecting Both Plan of Work & Annual Report

- **No longer requiring inclusion of 5 NIFA Priority Areas as planned programs**
An official memo from NIFA’s Director, Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy recently explained a decision to no longer require mandatory inclusion of the 5 Priority Areas as planned programs in the POW or the Annual Report. The primary reason for this change in policy is to give MORE FLEXIBILITY to the states in how they structure and name their programs. This policy change does not diminish the importance of these priority areas, and NIFA will continue to collect data on them where possible (e.g. the National Outcomes & Indicators in the Annual Report). This policy change does not affect the POW software in any way. Users may still choose to use the radio buttons for the priority areas to name their programs if they wish. They may also choose to use “other” and provide their own names for their programs.
- **All new help text inserted into software**
The software is currently being updated to include all new help text wherever users see the  symbol. This updated help text is based on frequently asked questions received by NIFA over the past few fiscal years and also reflects changes that have been made in the software. This help text is planned for release in the software in January, 2013.

Changes Affecting Annual Report Only

- Option to indicate “Not reporting on this planned program”
 - This is a new feature that allows users to indicate they are not reporting on an entire planned program. The feature enables users to quickly check a box and give a short, 1-3 sentence explanation (15 lines max) of why they are not reporting on the planned program. Generally, , reasons for not reporting on a planned program are due to funding/resources being put towards other programs and/or the renaming and restructuring of other programs has caused the program activities to be grouped under other programs in the POW.
 - This new feature eliminates the hassle of having to use other sections in the planned program (such as the activities box) to explain why they aren’t reporting on it; these explanations sometimes are unclear or not easily found and cause confusion for the state and NIFA reviewer.
 - Screenshot:
 - Upon clicking into a planned program for the first time, you will get a screen that asks you to make a determination on whether or not you are reporting on the program. It is mandatory to give a reason if you click “not reporting on this program.” Upon clicking save, you will either be brought back to your program listing (if you clicked “not”) or to the next section of the program to start reporting data (if you indicated you are reporting on the program).



The screenshot shows a web application interface for reporting on a planned program. At the top, there is a green navigation bar with links: Home, About POW, Contact Us, REEIS, Log Out, and Back to Portal. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links: Report Overview, Merit Review Process, Stakeholder Input, Planned Programs (highlighted), Summary, and Nat'l Outcomes. The main content area has a green header for 'IV. Reporting on Planned Program'. Below this, the 'Name of the Planned Program' is 'Global Food Security and Hunger'. There are two radio buttons: 'Reporting on this Program' (selected) and 'Not Reporting on this Program'. Below the radio buttons is a text area for 'Reason for not reporting on this Planned Program (15 Lines Max)'. At the bottom of the form are 'Save' and 'Cancel' buttons.

- If you have already indicated that you ARE reporting on a planned program but later decide to change it, you should go to the “Knowledge Areas” section under the program, as indicated in the below screenshot. There, you will have the option to click a link to regain the above screenshot and the “not reporting on this program” option.

Home | About POW | Contact Us | REEIS | Log Out | Back to Portal

Report Overview | Merit Review Process | Stakeholder Input | Planned Programs | Summary | Nat'l Outcomes

Knowledge Areas | Inputs | Activity | Outputs | State Defined Outputs | State Defined Outcomes | Ext. Factors | Evaluation

IV (A): Planned Program (Knowledge Area) ?

Name of the Planned Program:
Families: Expanding Human Potential [Edit name](#)

Reporting on this Planned Program [Click here if not reporting on this Planned Program](#)

1. Enter the program Knowledge Area(s) (up to 20) and a percentage for each (total of each column must equal either 100% or 0%).

KA Code	Knowledge Area	% 1862 Extension	% 1890 Extension	% 1862 Research	% 1890 Research
607	Consumer Economics	5		40	

[Delete](#)

- National Outcomes & Indicators

In lieu of building data fields directly into the POW software (unable due to time and resource constraints), NIFA has chosen to use Google Forms as one of the methods for collecting data on the National Outcomes and Indicators. Remember, reporting data for these indicators is completely voluntary. If you choose to report data for any of the indicators, you can access the Google Forms (there is one for each priority area) via the links provided in the software, as indicated in this screenshot. Clicking a link will open up a new window and allow you to use that particular Google Form. If your institution does not allow use of Google Forms, you may report the data by filling out a Word Form and submitting it via email to pow@nifa.usda.gov. This Word Form will be available and sent to all POW users via email by January 15, 2013.

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Links to National Outcomes & Indicators GoogleForms

[Childhood Obesity](#)

[Climate Change](#)

[Food Safety](#)

[Global Food Security and Hunger](#)

[Sustainable Energy](#)

[Done](#)

General Guidance on using the Google Forms:

- The forms are not linked to the Annual Report. This means that if you submit your Annual Report, you will lose the ability to get the links via the software

if you still have data to report on the indicators. This is why NIFA has also made the links available in email communications. If you cannot locate those emails/links, please contact pow@nifa.usda.gov for the links.

- You may submit multiple times on one form. For example, if you report data for indicator “1A” under climate change but then later decide to report data on “2C” on climate change as well, you can do so with two separate submissions. However, if you make a submission once and then later decide to change the data you reported, you must contact NIFA to rescind your original submission; email pow@nifa.usda.gov and indicate your institution, name, and the general time/data of submission that you want to rescind). After you rescind the original submission, you may use the form again to re-submit the data you wish.

- Uploading of OGFM Supplemental forms on Integrated Activities

In order to streamline reporting processes, and in response to one of the Panel recommendations, NIFA is currently building a feature in the software to allow uploads of the supplemental forms on integrated activities (NIFA-PLAN, NIFA-REPT, Brief Summaries) that are normally sent via email to the Office of Grants & Financial Management (OGFM; Brenda Barnett and Jharana Sahu). This new feature will allow only for PDF file types to be uploaded but will give the state the choice of submitting one combined PDF (combination of all three supplemental forms) or three separate PDFs. Nothing will change regarding the information that must be included on the forms themselves. This new feature merely provides a new OPTION for how states may complete this required reporting without having to use email and attachments.

NOTE: This feature is currently being built and may not be ready for use in the software until March, 2013. Once it is in the software, using this feature is COMPLETELY OPTIONAL. Any state that wishes to email in their supplemental forms as they have in the past may continue to do so in FY13.